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Communist China: [Growing confusion and disorder in the provinces may be further weakening Peking's authority.]

[Factional fighting is evident not only in provinces such as Fukien and Yunnan, the scene of recent heavy armed conflict, but apparently exists in other provinces where substantial progress toward achieving stability under Maoist-approved leaders has been claimed. The Hong Kong consul general notes that in province after province settlements worked out in Peking have come apart after the provincial representatives returned home.]

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Developments such as these have led the Hong Kong consul general to conclude that, although ad hoc consultations and negotiations with local military leaders are a logical outcome of Peking's impaired authority, the effectiveness of these tactics is questionable. The consul general believes that "Peking's grip on the provinces is probably further weakened by continued divisions and disagreements among the leadership."

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*Czechoslovakia: Antonin Novotny has been replaced as party first secretary by Alexander Dubcek but retains his less important position as president, at least for the time being.

Dubcek's election is unprecedented--no member of the Slovak minority has ever held the top party job in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was made chief of the party in Slovakia in 1963, as part of the country's belated de-Stalinization process. Under Dubcek's rule the Slovaks have been in the vanguard of opposition to Novotny and his conservative policies.

25X1 [redacted] Premier Josef Lenart, also a Slovak, is to be replaced by economic planning chief Oldrich Cernik. [redacted] it is likely that Lenart was pushed out because it would be impolitic for Slovaks to hold both top party and government posts.

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The Dubcek regime probably will be a coalition representing moderate and reform elements which brought Novotny down. A coalition of forces was necessary to bring about Novotny's ouster, because the Slovak group in the central committee could not have done it alone.

These developments are not likely to cause serious popular disturbances. Nevertheless, wholesale changes in the top echelons of the party and government can be expected. The national assembly is scheduled to convene on 10 January.

Soviet party chief Brezhnev made a special trip to Prague in early December after Moscow realized that serious trouble was brewing. His purpose was to assure himself that the situation was not getting out of hand rather than to attempt to dictate a solution. The

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Russians have been staunch supporters of Novotny during his long tenure and vice versa. They are doubtless more interested in the stability of the Czechoslovak regime than in Novotny's personal fortunes.

For the time being, there are not likely to be any basic shifts in Czechoslovak relations with Moscow, but there may be some moderation in Prague's attitude toward the West--Germany in particular.

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Israel-Jordan: Tension is rising again along the border.

Yesterday's exchange of fire between Israeli and Jordanian forces was the third such incident this week. The Israelis may be initiating these exchanges in retaliation for continued Arab terrorist infiltrations from Jordan. On 1 January, an exchange apparently began between Israeli forces and terrorists on the occupied West Bank. Somewhat later, according to UN officials who were eyewitnesses, the Israelis fired across the river into Jordanian-held territory, killing four refugees.

Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan recently declared, "If the mine laying continues along the line with Jordan, it is doubtful that the population along the East Bank will be able to continue living where they do."

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